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ABSTRACT

Debate continues about the appropriate role for vocational education at the secondary level. The many educational reform reports issued during the early to mid-1980s initiated a reexamination of the role of secondary vocational education. As a result of the reform reports, high school graduation requirements in academic areas have increased, and the amount of time left for vocational education courses has been reduced. The amount and type of vocational courses needed has become an issue, with one faction calling for increased academic requirements for noncollege-bound youth and the other calling for increased job-specific training to prepare noncollege-bound youth for entry into the work force. The increasing numbers of at-risk youth have intensified this debate because secondary vocational education programs can provide an avenue to a productive life for many members of at-risk populations. Proponents who argue that vocational education should focus on general employability believe that specific skill training is best left to employers. Opponents to a focus on general employability training argue that high school may be the only opportunity for many youths to acquire job training. (A 25-item list of print resources and resource organizations is included.) (MN)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

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THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

An Overview of Trends and Issues

Debate continues about the appropriate role for vocational education at the secondary level. Should it provide specific skill training, or should it prepare individuals for employability in a more general fashion? Although vocational education at the secondary level was largely ignored by the many educational reform reports issued during the early to mid-1980s, those reports initiated the reexamination of the role of secondary vocational education.

As a result of the reform reports, high school graduation requirements in academic areas have increased, and the amount of time left for vocational education courses has been reduced. The amount and type of vocational courses needed have become an issue. Proponents of increased academic requirements argue that because many noncollege-bound high school students may eventually attend college, a broad background in basic skills is required. Opponents to this perspective counter that raising high school academic requirements deprives noncollege-bound students of the time needed for specific job training to prepare them for entry into the work force.

The growing numbers of at-risk youth have intensified this debate because secondary vocational education programs can provide an avenue to a productive life for many members of at-risk populations. Proponents who argue that secondary vocational education should focus on general employability believe that specific skill training should be left to the employer or be acquired at the postsecondary level. Those who favor specific skill training at the secondary level feel that high school may be the only opportunity for many youth to acquire such training.

This **Trends and Issues Alert** contains a number of resources that provide information about the role of vocational education at the secondary level. Included are print resources as well as organizations that can be contacted for further information.

Print Resources

Baumgart, Donald. "Secondary Voc. Ed.: An Alternative View." *Wisconsin Vocational Educator* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1987-88): 6, 17.

Boyer, Ernest. *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America.* New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

Commission for Educational Quality. *10 Recommendations for Improving Secondary Vocational Education.* Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1985. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 257 968).

Daggett, Willard R. *Strategic Vision and Planning: Keys to Educational Improvement.* Occasional Paper no. 100. Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1984. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 253 699).

Eash, Maurice J. and Fitzgerald, Ronald J. *Occupational Education and Industrial Policy: Revitalizing the United States Economy.* Occasional Paper 1.10. Boston: Institute for Learning and Teaching, University of Massachusetts, February 1987. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 284 000).

Flynn, Patricia M. "Vocational Education and Economic Development: The Need for Balance." Paper presented at the Design Conference for the National Assessment of Vocational Education (Washington, DC, September 11-12, 1986). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 284 005).

Goodlad, John I. *A Place Called School.* Hightstown, NJ: McGraw-Hill, 1984.

Kadamus, James A., and Daggett, Willard R. *New Directions for Vocational Education at the Secondary Level.* Information Series no. 311. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1986. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 272 771).

Lotto, Linda S. "The Unfinished Agenda: Report from the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education." *Phi Delta Kappan* 66, no. 8 (April 1985): 568-573. (ERIC No. EJ 316 706).

Magisos, Joel H. "Excellence in Secondary Vocational Education." In *Excellence in Vocational Education: Four Levels, Four Perspectives.* Information Series no. 287. Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1984. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 246 310).

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McNett, Ian. *Charting a Course: A Guide to the Excellence Movement in Education.* Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education, 1984. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 252 953).

Moore, Gary. "Vocational Education: Orientation & Preparation." *Wisconsin Vocational Educator* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1987-88): 6, 17. (ERIC No. EJ 363 135).

National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education. *Vocational Agriculture: A Unique Program That Should Be Retained. A Position Paper,* 1987. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 286 030).

National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education. *The Unfinished Agenda: The Role of Vocational Education in the High School.* Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1984. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 251 622).

Naylor, Michele. *Granting Academic Credit for Vocational Education.* ERIC Digest no. 57. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1986. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 275 887).

Naylor, Michele. *Improving Basic Skills of Vocational Education Students.* ERIC Digest no. 69. Columbus: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1988.

Pratzner, Frank C., and Russell, Jill Frymier. *The Roles and Functions of Vocational Education: Some Current Perspectives.* Columbus: The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1983. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 227 308).

Samuelson, Judith; Smink, Jay; Makin, Richard C.; and Wonacott, Michael E. *The Unfinished Agenda: An Implementation Guide.* The National Center for Research in Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1985.

Spence, David S. "Rethinking the Role of Vocational Education." *Educational Horizons* 65, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 20-23. (ERIC No. EJ 340 838).

William T. Grant Foundation's Commission on Work, Family and Citizenship. *The Forgotten Half: Non-College Youth in America.* Washington: William T. Grant Foundation, 1988. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 290 822).

Worthington, Robert M. "A Statement on Vocational Education in the Schools." Paper presented to the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education (Washington, DC, June 4, 1984). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 251 694).

Resource Organizations

American Vocational Association, 1410 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 (703/683-3111).

Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, William T. Grant Foundation, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 301, Washington, DC 20036-5541 (202/775-9731).

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090 (800/848-4815 or 614/486-3655).

Southern Regional Education Board, 592 10th Street, NW, Atlanta, GA 30318 (404/875-9211).

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